

The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association
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* *Trains too full for Cambridge North stops*
* *Faster train type, but not for Fen Line yet*

"It's been a long time coming" sang **Sam Cooke** back in 1964, and goodness, hasn't an awful lot changed since then? Railways, many still steam-operated, were pretty much on Death Row: the first Beeching Report had only just come out.

All changed! "So if you say – and nobody's contradicted me on this yet – that the railway enables economic growth, jobs and houses, then you've got a story" NR boss **Sir Peter Hendy** told *London Reconnections* magazine recently.

Of course, Sir Peter was not talking about the Fen Line, though he was talking about the importance of railways to London's economy. Come to think of it, we can make his essential point more than once - we have Cambridge too.

But the future's not what it was maybe, or if it is, it's still a long time coming. Not quite so far back as 1964 (50 years later, in fact) in 2014, GTR took on the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern management contract.

Essentially, GTR runs TSGN for the Government, signing up to bring in "half-hourly trains to Kings Lynn" using "air conditioned stock" by 2017.

However, since then we've seen Ely North Junction capacity turn out to be much less than the Government thought. We see *trains so full that they leave people behind* - and so unable to stop at what ought to be good news, Cambridge North. "A change is gonna come," Sam sang.
What we'd like to know is: when?

Colin Sampson, Chairman 01366 388003
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Issue 2/2016

Calling for the earliest delivery of the
'half-hourly' King's Lynn-King's Cross commitment

* *Downham-King's Cross - sharing the pain*
* *Lady in the Luggage Rack: all in this together*



Cambridge North: "Two lift shafts are now in place at the site of the new £50m station, which is anticipated to handle 3,000 passenger journeys a day. The new station – part of Network Rail's Railway Upgrade Plan to provide a bigger, better railway for Britain – will alleviate the pressure on Cambridge station, where people currently leave the train in order to travel by other means to the science and business parks." Photo: Network Rail.

New ministerial appointments – Chris Grayling – Secretary of State for Transport; John Hayes – Minister of State for Transport; Paul Maynard – Under Secretary of State for Transport [Rail]. Mr Hayes is MP for South Holland and The Deepings, a part of Lincolnshire where some Fen Line users (and FLUA members!) live.



Class 387 trains (which have 219 seats per 4-car unit, 2 plus 2 seating, air-conditioning, through gangways between units and a speed of 110 mph) are to be introduced on Cambridge and Peterborough services first.

Proposed Norfolk and Suffolk devolution deal:

"The Government will also continue to assist the West Anglia Main Line Task Force as it develops a business case for improving the rail corridor between Kings Lynn and London Kings Cross via Cambridge" (similar wording for Cambs/Peterborough proposal).

Liverpool Street to Cambridge - fastest trains 65 minutes. King's Cross to Cambridge – fastest journeys 46 minutes (by those trains from Kings Cross to King's Lynn departing every hour between 0844 and 1544).

Andy Gibbs, Vice-Chairman
Robert Stripe, Hon. President

**www.flua.org.uk – useful weblinks, statistics,
news and developments,
and members' section**

www.flua.org.uk/membership from £4.50 a year

Countdown to 2018 begins

2018 is the year when the expanded Thameslink network comes on stream. This is what we expect:

2018 Thameslink service pattern

Thameslink Mainline

- TL1 Bedford-London Bridge-Brighton 2tph
- TL2 Bedford-London Bridge-Gatwick Airport 2tph
- TL3 Bedford-London Bridge-East Grinstead 2tph, M-F peaks
- TL4 Bedford-London Bridge-Littlehampton 2tph, M-F peaks
- TL5 Peterborough-London Bridge-Brighton 2 tph
- TL6 Cambridge North-London Bridge-Brighton (Semi-fast service 2tph)

TL7 Cambridge-London Bridge-Maidstone East (Stopping service - Mondays to Saturdays only, 2tph)

Thameslink Metro

TL8 Welwyn GC (Mon-Fri peaks)-Blackfriars-Elephant & Castle-Sevenoaks 2tph

TL9 Luton (Mon-Fri peaks)-Kentish Town-Orpington 2tph

TL10 Luton-London Bridge-Rainham (Kent) 2tph

TL11 St Albans City-Elephant & Castle-Sutton (then Wimbledon) 2tph

TL12 St Albans City-Elephant & Castle-Wimbledon (then Sutton) 2tph.

2018 Great Northern service pattern:

Great Northern Metro

- Moorgate-Welwyn GC 4 tph
- Moorgate-Hertford North 4tph
- Moorgate-Stevenage 2tph
- Moorgate-Gordon Hill 4tph (Peak times only)

Great Northern Mainline

- Kings Cross-Kings Lynn
- Kings Cross-Peterborough (peak only)
- Kings Cross-Royston (peak only).

So, TL6 Thameslink trains running southwards will serve Cambridge North. But what about Mainline Kings Cross-Kings Lynn services? Will they call there? As the fastest route between Kings Cross and Cambridge, our trains serve commuters travelling from Cambridge to Kings Cross as well as Fen Line commuters to Kings Cross and Fen Line commuters to Cambridge. As we know, many seats (and luggage racks!) get filled twice during a train's journey.



Cambridge crowd's growing: the 1644 Kings Cross-Kings Lynn is due soon – only an hourly service in the Cambridge pm high peak period for north of Ely!



It's coming in now, packed to the gunwales as usual. Just when needed the most, 4-cars are detached, leaving a grossly-overfilled train for Kings Lynn.

Cambridge Express

As long as there are no more than two scheduled intermediate stops between Cambridge and Kings Cross, trains are officially described as 'Cambridge Expresses.'

And the 'Cambridge Express' concept is the bedrock of the Fen Line timetable, as the table below shows. What about these prime trains calling at Cambridge North?

		Cambridge Express May to December 2016 (Mondays to Fridays)																			
*Cambridge Express' is defined as a train between King's Cross and Cambridge calling at "no more than 2 other stations" between these points which "may but is not required to, extend to serve stations north of Cambridge" - see page 9, TSGN Train Service Requirements December 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525781/tsgn-service-level-commitments.pdf																					
		Shows 'Cambridge Express' trains ONLY (i.e. this not the full Fen Line or Cambridge-King's Cross service)																Northbound ONLY			
King's Cross	dep	0644	0714	0744	0814	0844	0914	0944	1014	1044	1114	1144	1214	1244	1314	1344	1414	1444			
Letchworth GC	arr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Royston	arr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Cambridge	arr	0731	0804	0833	09e04	09e30	1006	10e30	1101	11e30	1201	12e30	1303	13e30	1403	14e30	1502	15e30			
Cambridge North **	arr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Waterbeach	arr	0739	0812	0844	-	0941	-	1041	-	1141	-	1241	-	1341	-	1441	-	1541			
Ely	arr	0749	0822	0854	0924	0951	-	1051	-	1151	-	1251	-	1351	-	1451	-	1551			
Littleport	arr	0758	0829	0901	-	0958	-	1058	-	1158	-	1258	-	1358	-	1458	-	1558			
Downham Market	arr	0807	0838	0910	-	1007	-	1107	-	1207	-	1307	-	1407	-	1507	-	1607			
Watlington	arr	0813	0844	0916	-	1013	-	1113	-	1213	-	1313	-	1413	-	1511	-	1613			
King's Lynn	arr	0821	0852	0925	-	1021	-	1121	-	1221	-	1321	-	1421	-	1521	-	1621			
No of stops before Cambridge	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
** New station due to open on 21 May 2017		N.B. All northbound trains 4-cars north of Cambridge, except 1714, 1814 and 1914 (8-cars)																			
		Northbound ONLY (concluded)																			
King's Cross	dep	1514	1544	1614	1644	1714	1744	1814	1844	1914	1944	2014	2044	2114	2144	2214	2244	2314			
Letchworth GC	arr	-	-	-	-	1710	-	-	-	-	-	2010	2040	2110	2140	2210	2240	2310	2340		
Royston	arr	-	-	-	-	1720	1749	1819	18e49	1919	1950	2020	2050	2120	2150	2220	2250	2320	2350		
Cambridge	arr	1601	16e30	1702	17e35	1804	18e34	1908	19e34	2005	20e35	21e05	21e35	22e05	22e35	23e05	23e35	0005			
Cambridge North **	arr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Waterbeach	arr	-	1641	-	1746	-	1845	-	1945	-	2046	2116	2146	2216	2246	2316	2346	0016			
Ely	arr	-	1651	-	1756	1821	1855	1923	1955	2022	2056	2126	2156	2226	2257	2326	2357	0026			
Littleport	arr	-	1659	-	1804	-	1903	-	2003	-	2103	2133	2203	2233	-	2333	-	0033			
Downham Market	arr	-	1709	-	1813	-	1912	1938	2012	-	2112	2142	2212	2242	-	2342	-	0042			
Watlington	arr	-	1715	-	1819	-	1918	-	2018	-	2118	2148	2218	2248	-	2348	-	0048			
King's Lynn	arr	-	1724	-	1827	-	1927	1954	2026	-	2126	2156	2226	2256	-	2356	-	0056			
No of stops before Cambridge	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
** New station due to open on 21 May 2017		This is NOT a timetable																			
e service divides at Cambridge - front 4 cars only for Ely/King's Lynn g service divides at Royston - front 8 cars only for Cambridge/Ely/K Lynn																					
h On Friday nights only, service divides at Cambridge - front 4 cars only for Ely/King's Lynn																					
Shading shows 'Cambridge Express' services which terminate north of Cambridge																					

The shaded trains continue north of Cambridge: 21 to King's Lynn and 5 to Ely. The remaining eight (unshaded) trains terminate at Cambridge, these presenting opportunities for the contracted 'half-hourly' Fen Line service.

In the opposite direction, evening trains from Kings Lynn do not currently run fast south of Cambridge. Even so, each weekday 15 'Cambridge Expresses' start at Kings Lynn and 1 starts at Downham Market. 5 more start at Ely.

Just one snag. Most 'Cambridge Expresses' shrink north of Cambridge; north of there, four cars is the usual ration (there's six 8-car exceptions, mostly to/from Ely).

Four cars are just not enough! Peak trains are grossly overfilled. Sometimes people just get left behind.

Hang on, new station, coming soon. Fantastic opportunity for Fen Line people to work or do business at the adjacent knowledge-based industry cluster!

Err, but with 4-car trains so overfilled already, what chance is there to carry yet more passengers to and from the new station? We need more 8-car trains, now.

Ely Area Task Force

FOLLOWING February's Downham Rail Summit, called by Cabinet Minister and South West Norfolk MP **Elizabeth Truss** (now Britain's first lady Lord Chancellor!) and the subsequent pledging of funding by LEPs and Councils for a feasibility study, a task force has been set up to get the detailed feasibility work started. Its aim: get everything sorted so the nationally and regionally significant Ely North Junction project can start in CP6 (2019-2024).

The work involves both rail and road issues and the task force thus brings together MPs, LEPs, County and District Councils, the Department for Transport and Network Rail. It is far from a quick job though, so back to today's big issue: we need longer trains now (especially if they are to stop at Cambridge North), while the Ely Area Task Force is preparing for the longer term of CP6.

Cambridge-Kings Lynn 8-car project

Yes, longer trains – now! This is where the Henty Report's **Cambridge-Kings Lynn 8-car** proposal comes in.

"The project will relieve overcrowding in the Peak Hour between Kings Lynn and Cambridge. These services are currently 8-car or 12-car between Cambridge and London Kings Cross but due to constraints on the Kings Lynn Line are only 4-car in length north of Cambridge. There is Peak crowding on these services particularly between Ely and Cambridge. Network Rails obligation is to develop a solution to enable 8-car operation of Peak services between Kings Lynn and Cambridge (and onto London Kings Cross)."

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=30064799459> – see pages 29 and 35.

NR, DfT and GTR have been beavering away developing options for the project, which would embrace:

- * platform extensions at Littleport (southbound) and at Waterbeach (both platforms);
- * Selective door opening (SDO) operation at Littleport (northbound) and Watlington, using existing platforms;
- * power upgrade and new berthing for more 8-car trains.

New trains will have SDO controls – for those with long memories, shades of the old "travel in front carriage for Magdalen Road!" It's different really, as with SDO there's no danger of there being unlocked doors adjacent to where there's no corresponding platform.

Given SDO, there's no need to lengthen platforms expensively where passenger flows are lower. But why then longer platforms at Waterbeach and why on earth one long, one short at Littleport?

Waterbeach is easy to answer – not only is it the busiest unstaffed station, but it's also the place where trains into and out of Cambridge from the north are at their absolute busiest – pretty obvious if you think about it.

But *Littleport* – why doesn't one size fit all? The answer is that it would – 4-car platforms can handle the passenger flows there. But with the driver locking the back 4 cars, a southbound 8-car train would block the barrow crossing, in the opposite direction an 8-car train would block the level crossing. And no, it's not a good idea to have the back part of the train (that part furthest from the driver) used for boarding and alighting.

It so happens that *removal* of the increasingly worrisome barrow crossing is due. Platform 1 access? See below!



A ready-made subway? We agree – the slip road (minimal traffic flows) needs to be made pedestrian only, flood proofed and well lit, as does a new ramp to the southbound platform 1. We support NR's plans, made public in June.

"Going flat out for the Fens"

"An explosion in the number of people moving out of London and its immediate hinterland and venturing into the Fens has prompted plans to upgrade commuter services between the capital, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk" wrote **Ruth Bloomfield** in the *Evening Standard* on Wednesday 20 July. "This autumn Govia Thameslink Railway, which runs the service between King's Cross and King's Lynn known as the Fen Line, will launch a consultation on proposals that include introducing new wi-fi-enabled trains capable of running at 110 miles per hour. It will also consider increasing the frequency of London trains to every half hour."

<http://www.homesandproperty.co.uk/property-news/homes-along-the-fen-line-journeys-to-london-from-cambridgeshire-norfolk-and-the-fens-set-to-improve-a102886.html> for the full story.

Sharing my pain, by Andy Gibbs

The last two months have been tiring not only for reasons of unseasonal warm weather!! - but also for varying operational issues within (and sometimes out of) the control of Great Northern. I have had reason to submit four delay repay claims in the last two months; whilst this may not seem many, the number of on-time arrivals at both King's Cross am and Downham Market pm are pitifully rare. I work near Blackfriars, by the way.

The big four delays were as follows:

14.06.2016 – 1814 King's Cross (KGX)-King's Lynn (KLN) delayed upon departure, resulting in an over 30 minutes delayed arrival at Downham Market (DOW).

22.06.2016 – 1814 King's Cross-King's Lynn delayed upon departure, resulting in an over 30 minutes delayed arrival at Downham Market.

01.07.2016 - Aimed for the 2044 KGX – DOW this was subsequently cancelled due to overhead wire problems in the Cambridge area, boarded the 2114 to Cambridge, travelled on a Double Deck Bus to Ely via Waterbeach (supplied by Ensignbus of Purfleet, Essex) and finally boarded the 2315 Ely to Downham, arriving at 2334.

18.07.2016 – 1644 King's Cross-King's Lynn departed King's Cross at 1737 (signal box fire there) and arrived at Downham circa 1930.

Then, to cap it all: 18.07.2016 – 1644 King's Cross-King's Lynn was "only 4 coaches tonight," I noted, "and is leaving people behind at Cambridge, 20 mins late."

Hmm, I'm going to start taking more detailed notes!

Big squeeze

All major London stations have more passengers arriving in the morning peak than departing in the evening peak except for Kings Cross, where arrival and departure numbers are evenly matched. Nevertheless, it has one of the lowest crowding levels of all major London stations, according to the latest Government statistics. Perhaps that explains why people are "going flat out for the Fens" in preference to other commuter areas!

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541587/rail-passengers-crowding-2015.pdf

Major engineering work on the London to King's Lynn route

Sunday 1 November 2015 until approximately 20:00

Major engineering work is taking place on the London to King's Lynn route, while Network Rail undertake work in preparation for a new station north of Cambridge. Trains between London King's Cross and King's Lynn will run to an amended timetable, with buses replacing trains between Cambridge and Ely. Overall journey times will be extended. Please refer to the timetables below:

London and Cambridge to Ely and King's Lynn												
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
London King's Cross	07:15	08:15	09:15	10:15	11:15	12:15	13:15	14:15	15:15	16:15	17:15	18:15
Cambridge	08:00	09:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00	19:00
Ely	08:45	09:45	10:45	11:45	12:45	13:45	14:45	15:45	16:45	17:45	18:45	19:45
King's Lynn	09:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	13:30	14:30	15:30	16:30	17:30	18:30	19:30	20:30

It might not be the happiest of reading, but we know the work has to be done (and we're grateful it's being done at weekends and not workdays). But for heaven's sake, we need these essential bus times **displayed** (you can see it can be done) especially at unstaffed stations. We can't always get a mobile signal!

Housing growth

OVER 800 new houses proposed for **Downham Market** in the last few months – planning applications have been submitted recently for sites at Bridle Lane, East of Howdale Rise and at Nightingale Lane. And at **Watlington**, plans for a new, 50-space rail users' car park have been approved.

... and industrial strength growth

"Waterbeach new town has 'reasonable capacity' for 10,000 homes - with first buildings finished 2019" reported the *Cambridge News* on 21 July. Developers *Urban&Civic*, appointed by the Ministry of Defence to lead development of the former airfield area, says their plans could form part of a wider development of up to 10,000 new homes, in partnership with land to the east of the site being promoted by RLW Estates, a scheme known as "Denny St. Francis." We understand that the rail industry has been talking to the prospective developers about a potential new Waterbeach station should the new town go ahead, possibly on a site to the north of the existing one.

The Strike

NOT the famous *Comedy Strip* film, nowhere near as funny either! We're talking about the strike that could affect you. In actual fact, GTR is facing more than one strike, but the one that concerns us at the moment is the one that might occur following balloting in mid-August of station staff over GTR's plans to change ticket sales arrangements. The background is at the links below – as always, check before you travel.

<https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-to-ballot-station-staff-across-govia-thameslink-railways/>

<http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/about-us/news/gtr-disappointed-over-rmts-latest-call-for-industrial-action/>



Why the Littleport barrow crossing is 'worrisome' – bends, at both ends, hide fast passenger – and freight – trains, not stopping and running at up to 75mph.

Lady in the Luggage Rack

by **Mawrenna Gleid**

This isn't quite the column it was originally intended to be. But we've had such a rush of terrible events in 2016 that it doesn't seem right to focus on the daily hassles of commuting. So let's talk about the good.

Have you seen the whiteboard beside the main entrance at Cambridge station? No? Check it out next time you're passing. (I hear there's one at Ely too.)

It's not on duty every day, but when it is it never fails to make me stop and look, no matter how much of a hurry I'm in. Whoever's responsible for coming up with a charming, smart, and funny message on an almost daily basis, pat yourself on the back. **You're certainly brightening this commuter's day.**

Have you ever heard the dreaded words, 'a passenger on this train has been taken ill' come over the speaker system? It happened to my morning train a few weeks ago, and I couldn't have been more impressed by everyone involved.

A lady fainted, and was eased down to the ground by the man behind. Another man gave up his seat once she'd come round. Someone offered her something to eat, and someone else pulled the communications cord. Within two minutes station staff had arrived, and once they were sure the lady was recovered, we were on the move within five minutes. A round of applause to every one of them.

Sometimes commuting feels like a battle: to get the last seat, or even to simply get into an overcrowded carriage at all. But we're all in this together.

So smile at your fellow passengers, and lend a hand where you can. One day you might be the one who needs help from someone in an adjacent luggage rack.

Kings Lynn resident Mawrenna is a regular on the Cambridge Run.

Ten years ago

A daily commuter dismayed by a fire that closed Kings Cross made the pages of the *Evening Standard* - City broker **Phil Bone** wanted to know why he had to get a hotel room instead of catching his train back to King's Lynn. Meanwhile, we applauded the temporary service substituted between Cambridge and King's Lynn which ran *every half hour*: "That's customer service!" we said.

Order, order!

THOUGH naturally concentrating on Southern routes, GTR's performance was debated at Westminster on 13 July. Both the Hansard record and the relevant House of Commons Library Debate Pack make thought-provoking reading.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-07-13/debates/1607133500001/GoviaThameslinkRailService>
<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CDP-2016-0139> - click on 'Full Report'

FLUA diary 2016

Saturday 19 November 2016 – AGM, King's Lynn.

Guest Speaker: **Helen Warnock**, NR Area Director.